

Forest Conservation Directive Goal Setting for Maryland

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

C-1 Conference Room, Tawes State Office Building

12:30-3 PM

“The first meeting to develop specific forest conservation goals for Maryland”

Next Meeting: Jan. 29- Maryland DNR C-1 Conference Room

Topic: Sustainable Forestry Framework and Targeting Forest Conservation

Tasks before next meeting:

Develop draft strategies for targeting forests, in 3 categories:

Protection,
Management, and
Restoration

Introductions- Steven W. Koehn, State Forester, provided a welcome and background on the forest conservation directive. He identified the need to build a simple core concept to guide the process of developing a coherent goal. “Keeping forestland in forest” was offered as a core concept.

Meeting Purpose- Anne Hairston-Strang provided an overview of the Forest Conservation Directive, the elements of the directive and initial State goals for inclusion in a collective Chesapeake-Bay wide forest conservation goal.

The Chesapeake-Bay wide goal is due in Fall 2007. The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) has asked for contributions from the signatories by April 30th to allow time to combine the different goals and gain approval by the appropriate bodies in the CBP. In Maryland, four additional meetings in January, February, March, and April are anticipated for developing a forest conservation goal.

Initial guidance has been provided by the CBP Forestry Work Group to elaborate on the elements of the directive:

- Targeting for water quality,
- Slowing forest loss and expanding critical forests,
- Linking to stormwater and land use regulations,
- Providing a goal, framework, and milestones, and
- Supporting a collaborative process.

Maryland DNR staff developed a suggested draft for the organization of the goal document:

- Sustainable Forestry Framework
- Targeting forest conservation for water quality
- Forest conservation strategies and mechanisms
- Roles in stormwater and land use regulations
- Green markets and Incentives
- Priority Actions and Partnerships

The CBP Forestry Workgroup is planning regional workshops on topics designed to support development of forest conservation goals. Two planned workshops are:

- Remote Sensing and GIS for Riparian Forest Buffers (Feb. 6, Annapolis, CBF)
- Land Trust Summit (tentatively March, agenda and location TBD).

States have been invited to share targeting strategies at the regular Forestry Work Group meeting on Feb. 7 in the MD Dept. of Natural Resources C-1 conference room, Tawes State Office Building, Annapolis.

State of the Chesapeake Forest- Eric Sprague gave an overview of the new report on the state of the Chesapeake Forest, a two-year effort led by the USDA Forest Service and the Conservation Fund. He detailed losses of forests and declines in needed functions, including drinking water protection, habitat, forest products and rural economies, and stream functions. This report was the information base for developing the Forest Conservation Directive. Chapter 8 of the report includes a table recommending general strategies for advancing forest conservation.

Tool Overview- Anne Hairston-Strang

Program Open Space Priorities- Chip Price, MD DNR, described the different components of Program Open Space and shared a map of state-wide focus areas. POS includes the related land conservation programs of Rural Legacy and Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation.

Recent Land Planning Legislation- Lynda Eisenberg of the Maryland Department of Planning gave an overview of local land planning elements and provisions from 2006 legislation that are particularly relevant to forest conservation goals.

Local Land Protection, Parks, and Recreation Plans have been recently completed, and include a resource conservation element. A state-wide plan will be developed, slated for next March.

House Bill 1141 requires revisions to Growth Planning, additional Municipal Plan Elements, a new Water Resources Plan Element, and revised Sensitive Areas Element to include wetlands, forests, and agricultural lands by October 1, 2009. Water Resources Plans need to address water supply and effluents, including stormwater treatment. (Forest conservation could be relevant for protecting water supply, aiding recharge of aquifers, and infiltrating stormwater runoff.)

House Bill 2 may be the most relevant piece of legislation to the forest conservation goals. It requires a Priority Preservation Element in the local Comprehensive Plan to maintain certification for Agricultural Land Preservation Program (over 20 of MD's 23 counties) by July 1, 2008. This considers forests and agricultural land, and ability to maintain productive lands.

Coordination with the interagency outreach to local governments on the new provisions was recommended for the Forest Conservation goal process.

Other Plans and Reports- Other relevant reports were listed in a handout. The recommendations from the recently completed report of the Governor's Commission on Sustainable Forestry to Protect the Chesapeake Bay in MD were handed out. Denise Clearwater of MDE gave brief description of the Maryland Wetland Conservation Plan from 2003 and the recently completed detailed targeting for wetland preservation and restoration. Other relevant plans include the 2003 Maryland's Land Conservation Programs Report, the 2006 Maryland Strategic Forest Resource Plan, the Maryland Forest Conservation Act 10-year Report, strategies for Forest Protection/Expansion from the State of the Chesapeake Forest Kickoff Meeting (10-20-06), and the Maryland Strategic Forest Land Assessment.

Conservation Priorities Discussion-Steven W. Koehn and Anne Hairston-Strang

Targeting Forest Conservation for Water Quality

Discussion points at the meeting and offered in written comments prior to the meeting included the following:

The targeting of forest conservation for water quality, broadly defined, should include biological elements, the context of watersheds, and multiple/mixed land use/cover. MD Biological Stream Survey has identified Stronghold Watersheds with exceptional water quality that could be core targeting areas. Headwater forests should be an important component. Stream/water body buffers should be an element, but not to the extent that it dominates the targeting. Forest conservation for water quality should include all the elements of hydrogeology that affect the different hydrological elements such as percolation, subsurface storage, and runoff.

The targeting should be place-based, and reflect a watershed context at different scales. Important elements include percent of forest in watershed and forest condition.

Multiple targeting elements are needed to address different aspects of the goal. Three aspects suggested were:

- Protection
- Management
- Restoration

Forest conservation targeting should consider needs within the continuum of developed to rural areas, including opportunities to increase effectiveness of mitigation and implementation of the Forest Conservation Act and other programs.

Framework for the Forest Conservation Goal

Steve Koehn supplied an overview of using concepts of sustainable forestry as a framework for the state's forest conservation goal. The definition of forest was suggested to include old field succession. Discussion included the need to provide tangible incentives for landowners to continue to provide public benefits that come with keeping land forested, especially when alternative land uses can be very lucrative. Numerous avenues were discussed:

- Payments to landowners for public benefits—new “currency” of land value;
- Reduce/eliminate property tax with a forest stewardship plan;
- Offset forest stewardship plan cost;
- Payment/Rental for forest conservation;
- Develop payments for ecosystem services/values to offset management costs;
- Need multiple markets to stack incentives from a variety of forest functions;
- Identify potential buyers of forest functions as basis for developing markets;
- Any single market will be insufficient to encourage continued forest use;
- Conservation Security Program for well-managed forest land;
- Develop dependable funding source for easements;
- Encourage new timber/fiber/chemical markets with recurring income streams;
- Reduce disincentives from regulations on forests;
- Encourage livable communities in denser urban areas to conserve rural areas in working landscapes; and
- Structure taxes to give incentive to support healthy watershed functions, such as taxes related to percent forest or related metric in a watershed or jurisdiction that would be considered healthy.

Outreach to Local Jurisdictions

Regional meetings on the issue for counties and municipalities were suggested. Participating in the ongoing outreach to local governments for recent planning legislation was also suggested.

The meeting concluded at 3pm.

Attendance:

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12-14-06**Agency/Organization**

Maryland DNR Tributary Strategies Consultant
Calvert County Planning and Zoning
The Nature Conservancy
Consultant
Maryland DNR Program Open Space
City of Annapolis
MD Environmental Trust
Maryland Department of the Environment
Maryland DNR Ecosystem Analysis Center
The Conservation Fund (Maryland)
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage
Maryland Association of Counties
The Conservation Fund
Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Mead-Westvaco
Maryland DNR Fisheries
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Ecosystem Recovery Institute, Inc.
Maryland Forests Association
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage
MD Department of Agriculture
MD Dept of Business and Economic Dev.
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland DNR MBSS
MD Forests Association
Newpage Corporation
US Fish and Wildlife Service
State Assn. of District Forestry Boards
Baltimore County DEPRM
The Conservation Fund
Maryland DNR Program Open Space
Chesapeake Bay Program
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland Forest Association
Tree Farm and MALPF
Chesapeake Bay Commission
US Forest Service
US Forest Service
Maryland DNR Forest Service
Maryland DNR Resource Planning
Landowner